



All the lead mothers and many babies traveled to Freetown from across Sierra Leone's 13 districts.
Photo: Collin Benedict/USAID Sierra Leone

Young mothers show others: breastfeeding works!

On August 4th, Sierra Leone's Ministry of Health and Sanitation celebrated this year's World Breastfeeding Week and its themes of communication and youth engagement. The Ministry brought together mothers from across Sierra Leone to celebrate and launch their important work in explaining and promoting breastfeeding to their communities as part of the "We Pikin Network." In collaboration with its partners, including USAID, the Ministry will build on public awareness and advocacy activities to protect, promote and support mothers in the community to begin early and exclusive breastfeeding, and then to support the introduction of appropriate complementary foods as their babies grow. USAID is actively involved in providing training and support to Sierra Leonean mother care groups through its Sustainable Nutrition and Agriculture Program which plans to work with more than 2500 mothers who as leaders, will support more than 50,000 other mothers. Each 'We Pikin' group connects 10-15 volunteer mothers, and each group supports 50 households with infant and young child feeding practices. A total of 1,233 "We Pickin" groups are already supporting mothers nationwide and will be complemented by USAID's mother care groups.

Jean Benedict, USAID Country Team Manager, addressed the event's participants, including the Minister of Health and Sanitation, Zainab Bangura, and 250 people from all 13 districts/areas of Sierra Leone including all the lead mothers from the We Pikin Network. She highlighted the health and nutritional benefits of breastfeeding and added, "No matter where a child is born, every parent in the world is unified in wanting to give that child a strong and healthy start in life. USAID salutes "We Pikin" and the efforts of the government to enable half of all mothers in Sierra Leone to practice exclusive breastfeeding by 2015."